

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

What are the Synoptic Gospels? And how do Matthew, Mark and Luke choose to portray the story of Jesus, in order to emphasise the significance of his life, death and resurrection?

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

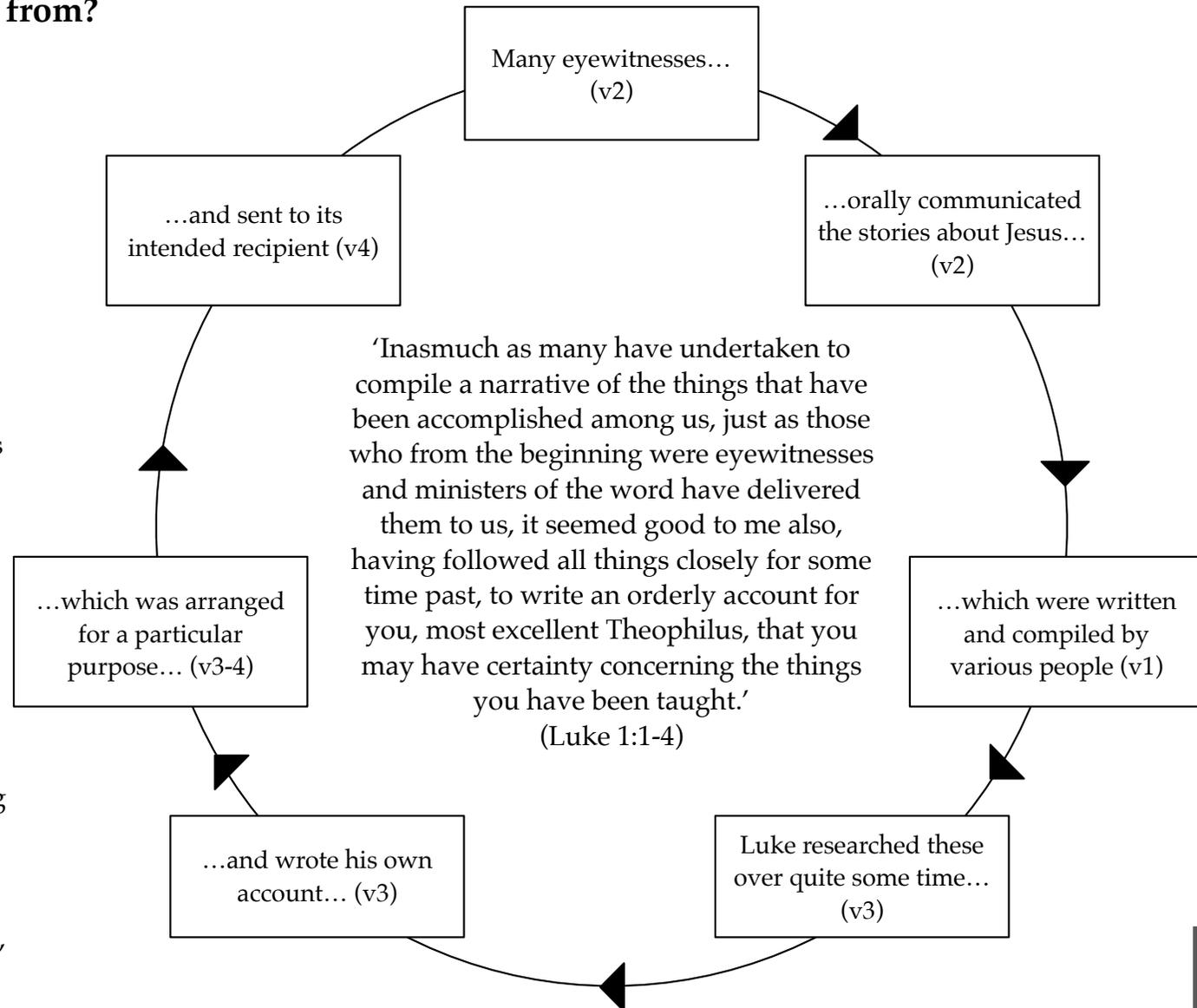
What is a gospel? Where did they come from?

What is a gospel?

- *Bios* = A form of biography
- They highlight the key events that surround a person; their words and deeds
- Whilst they are historical documents, they are not expected to be strictly chronological in order, but are often arranged thematically in order to emphasise the overall thrust and focus of the individual's life and work

Where did they come from?

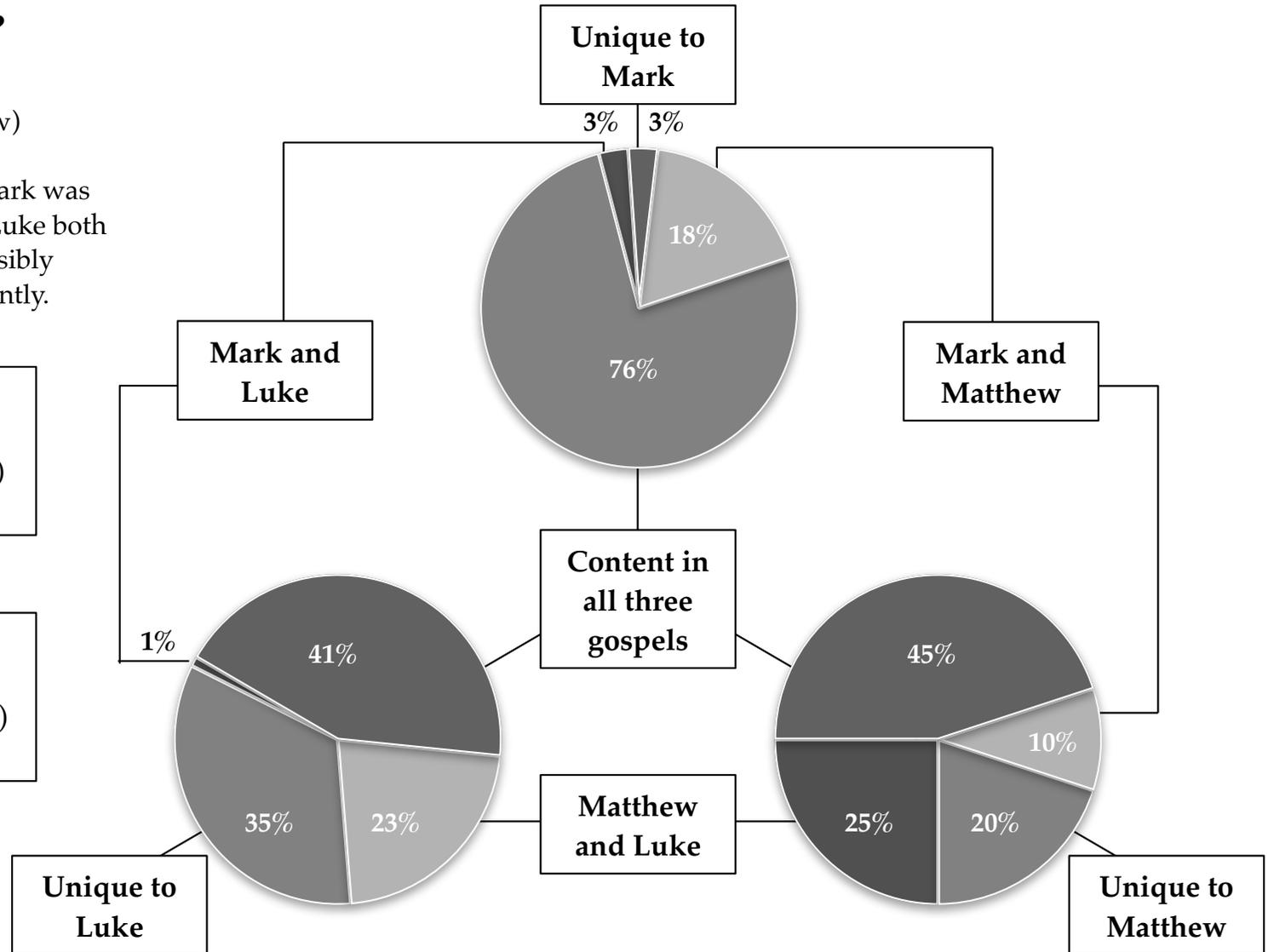
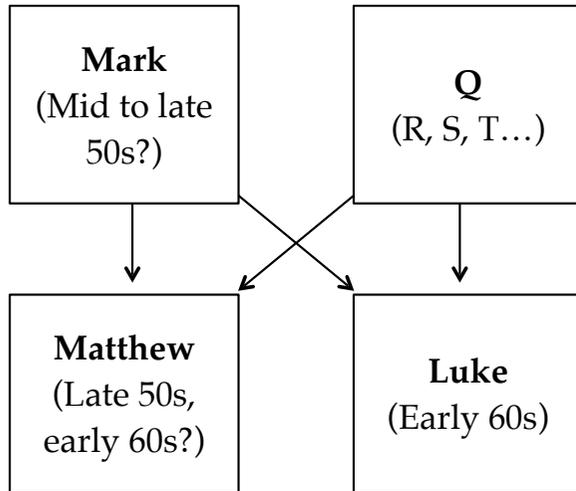
- **Source Criticism:** Seeks to reconstruct the original sources of the documents
- **Form Criticism:** Breaks down the books into sections and tries to work out the original setting for each story or item
- **Redaction Criticism:** Seeks to study how and why the documents were compiled as they were, and thus what is the purpose of the text?



Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

What are the Synoptic Gospels?

- *Synoptic* = *syn* (together) + *optic* (view)
- The most likely hypothesis is that Mark was written first and that Matthew and Luke both drew upon Mark's account (and possibly others). John was written independently.



Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

The feeding of the 5,000: an example of independence and interdependence

Number of words used to tell the story

Gospel	Number of words used
Matthew	157
Mark	194
Luke	153
John	199

Number of words common to all of the synoptic gospels: 53

Number of words John has in common with the synoptic gospels: 8

(five, two, five thousand, took loaves, twelve baskets of pieces)

Percentage of agreement between the gospels

Comparison	Percentage
Matthew / Mark	59
Matthew / Luke	44
Luke / Mark	40
John / Matthew	8.5
John / Mark	8.5
John / Luke	6.5

‘The following conclusions seem inevitable: John represents a clearly *independent* telling of the story. He uses only those words absolutely necessary to be telling the same story, and even uses a different Greek word for “fish”! The other three are just as clearly *interdependent* in some way. Those who know Greek recognise how improbably it is for two people independently to tell the same story in a narrative form and have a 60 percent agreement in the words used, and often in the exact word order.’ (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*)

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

Why are there differences between the accounts?

Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Cleansing of leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-16
Centurion of Capernaum	8:5-13	no parallel	7:1-10
Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39
Sick healed	8:16-17	1:32-34	4:40-41
Following Jesus	8:18-22	no parallel	9:57-62
Stilling the storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25
Gadarene demoniac	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39
Healing of the paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26
Matthew's call	9:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32
Fasting question	9:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39
Jairus and the Woman	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56

The authors were *selective*

- 'Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book [...] there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.' (John 20:30; 21:25)

The authors were *creative*

- Groupings of teachings or miracles
- Juxtaposition of a miracle and a teaching, to make the point in two way.
- **Exercise:** Compare the temptations in Matthew 4:5-10 and Luke 4:5-13. Why are they in a different order?

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

Christology and Crisis: Matthew

- Matthew is often described as ‘the most Jewish’ gospel because of his attention to detail about Jewish customs, his focus on ethics and the law, his criticism of the Jewish leaders, and his regular reference to OT scriptures
- It may have been written to Jewish Christians, or Christians in areas with large Jewish populations (Syria or Palestine?) helping them to see Jesus as the fulfilment of the OT and giving them an ethical framework for how to live as kingdom people
- A large amount of Matthew’s gospel is given over to sustained blocks of Jesus’ teaching

Torah	Matthew	Significance
Exodus 1:15-17	2:16-18	
Exodus 2:15-22	2:13	
Exodus 2:23-24	2:19-20	
Exodus 4:22	3:17	
Deuteronomy 8:2	4:1-2	
Exodus 19:20	5:1-2f	

Who is the Christ?

What is the Crisis?

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

Christology and Crisis: Matthew

Compare the final speeches of Moses and Jesus. What similarities do you notice?	
Deuteronomy 31:2-8	Similarities
<p>‘The Lord has said to me, ‘You shall not go over this Jordan.’ The Lord your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the Lord has spoken. And the Lord will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when he destroyed them. And the Lord will give them over to you, and you shall do to them according to the whole commandment that I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.” Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”</p>	
Matthew 28:16-20	
<p>‘Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”</p>	

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

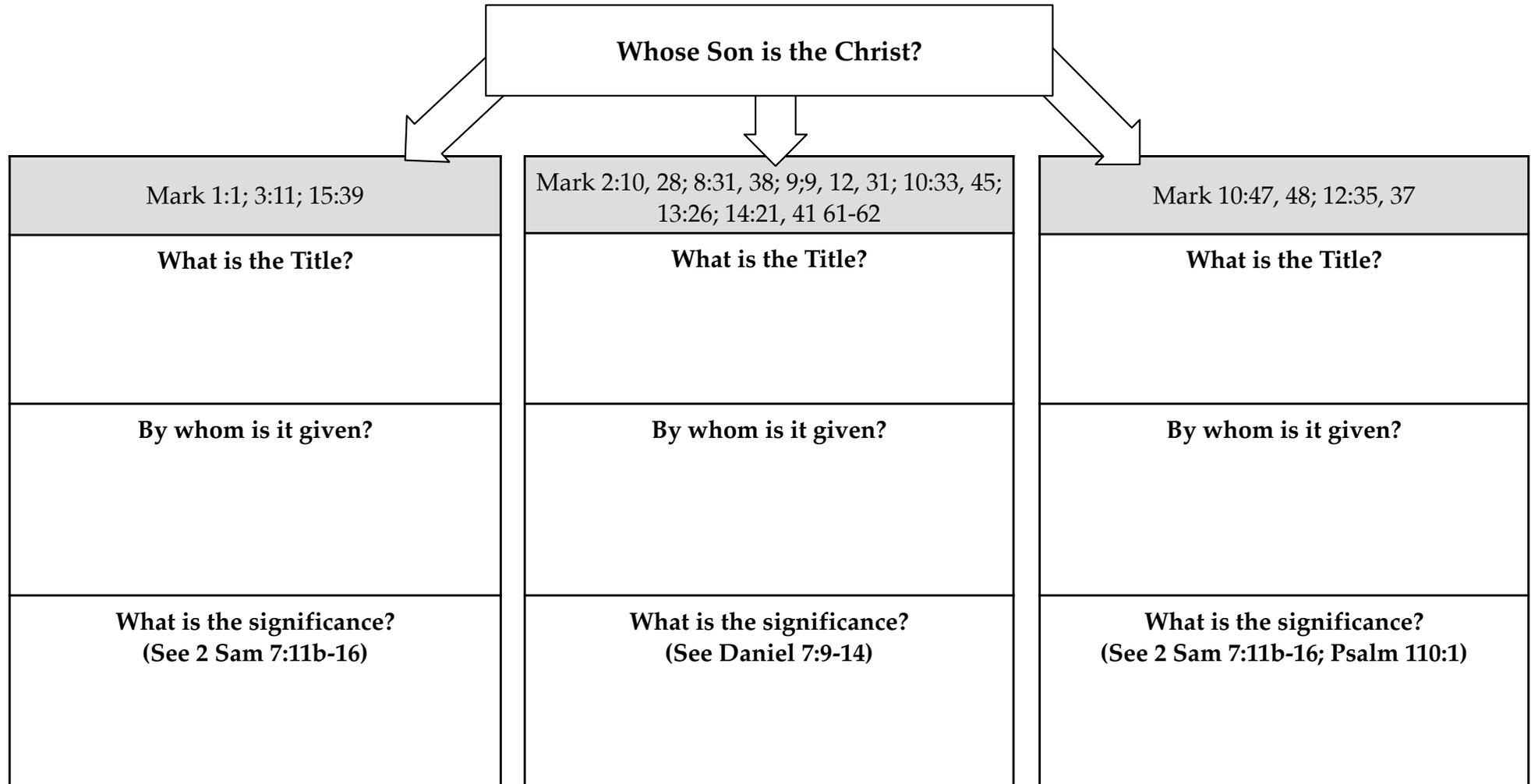
Christology and Crisis: Mark

- The first gospel account to be written
- Written to Gentiles. He translates Aramaic phrases and explains Jewish customs (e.g. handwashing in 7:3-4)
- Mark was not an eyewitness, but was 'Peter's Interpreter' (Eusebius' *Historica Ecclesiastica*, 3.39.15; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 106; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.1.2; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcion* 4:5 etc)
- Peter had a close relationship with Mark (1 Peter 5:13 – "my son")

Compare Peter's proclamation of the gospel with the structure of Mark's gospel	
Acts 10	Mark's Gospel
Good News' (v36)	'The beginning of the good news' (1:1)
God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit' (v38)	The coming of the Spirit on Jesus (1:10)
Beginning in Galilee' (v37)	The Galilean ministry (1:16-8:26)
He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil' (v38)	Jesus' ministry focuses on healings and exorcisms
We are witnesses of everything he did... in Jerusalem' (v39)	The ministry in Jerusalem (ch 11-14)
They killed him by hanging him on a cross' (v39)	Focus on the death of Christ (ch 15)
God raised him from the dead on the third day' (v40)	He has risen! He is not here' (16:6)

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

Christology and Crisis: Mark



Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

Christology and Crisis: Mark

Three major themes in Mark's Gospel		
The Activity of Jesus	The Passion of Jesus	The Cost of Following Jesus
Healings miracles and exorcisms. 1:16-8:26 - Demonstrations of power 'Immediately' used 42 times, compared to 7 in Luke and 4 in John	'[Mark is] a passion narrative with an extended introduction' (Martin Kähler)	The expectation of what it looks like to follow Jesus is modelled on his own suffering

Passage	Theme	Setting
1.1-15	Introduction	
1:16-6:6	Demonstration of Jesus' Authority	Ministry in Galilee
6:7-8:26		Ministry beyond Galilee
8:27-10:52	Testing of Jesus' Authority Through Suffering	Journey to Jerusalem
11:1-13:37		Judgment on Jerusalem
14:1-16:20		Death and Resurrection

↓

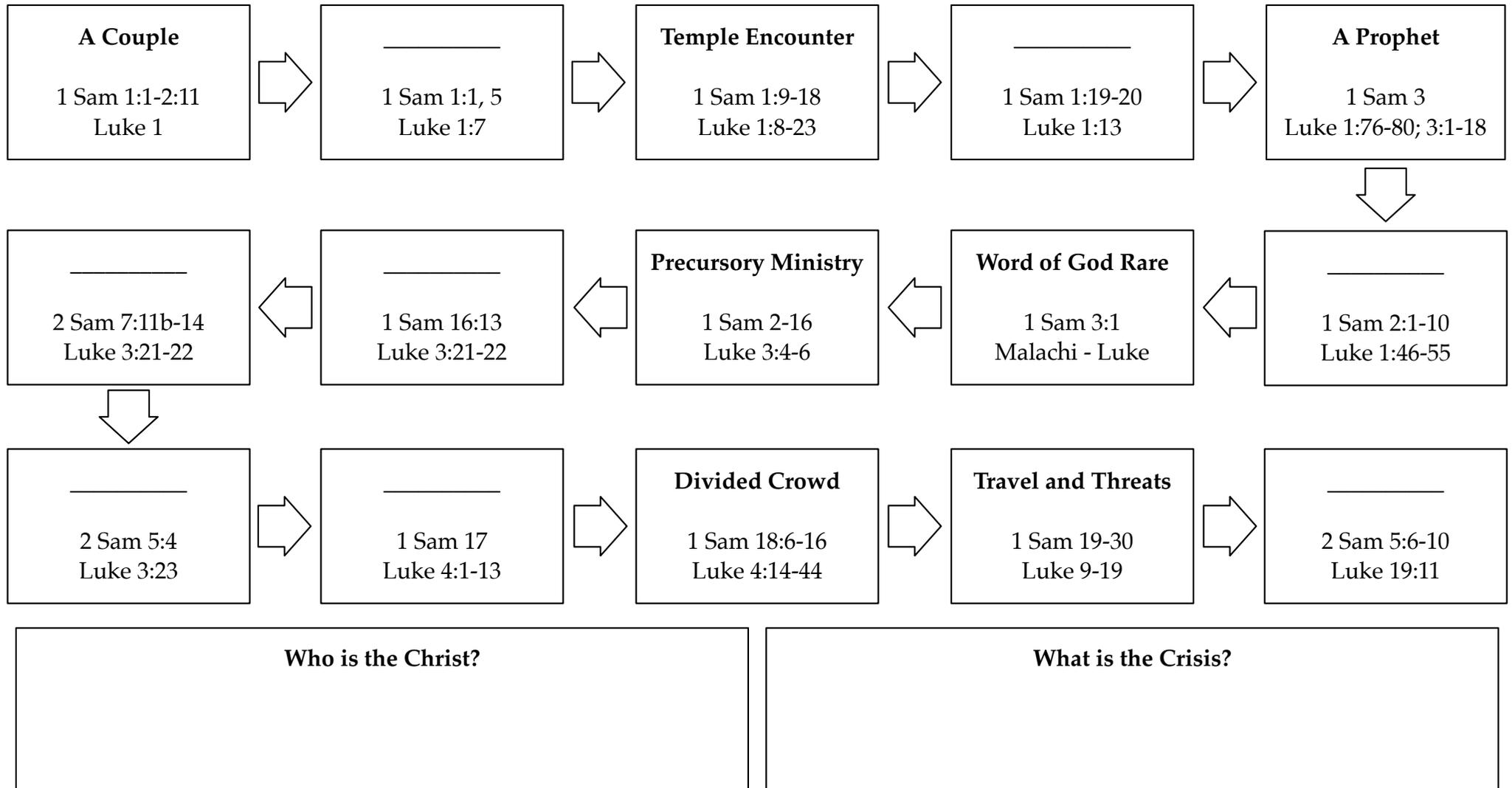
Cycle of Misunderstanding			
Jesus Predicts his Death	8:31	9:30-31	10:32-34
Disciples Misunderstand	8:32-33	9:32-34	10:35-40
Cost of Discipleship	8:34-38	9:35-37	10:41-45

Who is the Christ?

What is the Crisis?

Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

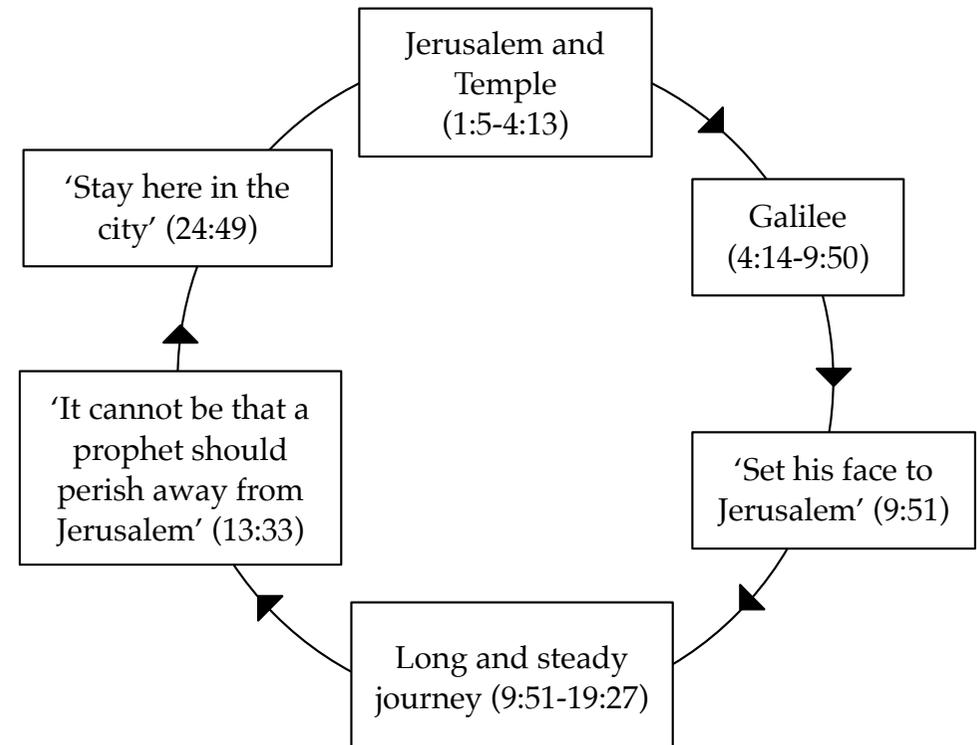
Christology and Crisis: Luke



Session 1: The Synoptic Gospels

Christology and Crisis: Luke

Jesus bears burdens	Jesus provides strength to bear burdens
Jesus appears to the meek and lowly	Begins and ends in the Temple (1:5-23; 24:53)
Mary's viewpoint (2:19, 51) and her family	Prayer (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 29; 11:1-4; 18:1-8; 22:40 etc)
Shepherds (2:9) rather than Wise Men	Holy Spirit: 18x. 57 in Acts. 6 in Mark. 12 in Matt
Angel appears to Mary (1:26) rather than Joseph (Matt 2:20)	Joy and Praise (ch 1-2 repeatedly; 10:17, 21; 15:7, 10; 19:37; 24:41, 53)
Warnings to the rich (12:13-21, 22-34; 16:14, 19-31; 18:18-25; 9:1-10)	
Eating with Sinners (5:29-32; 15:1-2; 19:7)	
The Lepers (5:12-16; 7:22; 17:11-19), crippled (5:17-26; 7:2) and blind (7:21-22; 18:35-43)	
Tax Collectors (5:27-30; 15:1-2; 19:1-10)	
Lost Coin (15:8-10) and Prodigal Son (15:11-32)	
Women: Mary x 13. Widow of Nain (7:11-17); Woman with ointment (7:36-50)	
Gentiles: Good Samaritan (10:29-37); Centurion (7:1-10) etc	



'Jerusalem is named about thirty-three times in Luke's gospel, as often as in Matthew, Mark and John combined; while it comes sixty times in Acts, the rest of the New Testament has it only fourteen times, which shows how central it is in Luke's thinking.' (Richard BurrIDGE)